

A note on the Rigvedic character “Nirriti (निर्ऋति)”

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A lesser known and hence one of the least discussed terms “**Nirriti (निर्ऋति)**” is found in a few hymns of **Rigved** and **Mandala-wise** its frequency is given below [1].

“**Nirriti/Nirrti/ निर्ऋति**”: 1(5), 5(1), 6(1), 7(3), 8(1), 10(13).

Meanings of the term **Nirriti (निर्ऋति)** are given in dictionary [2] as: evil force, adversity, death, destruction, illness, sufferings caused due to natural calamities like **Droughts, floods** etc.

In the following paragraphs, we will discuss about the **Rigvedic** term **Nirriti/Nirrti**, but the topic has been purposely divided into two parts, first we will look into some important references of the Two Early Mandalas and then in the next part, we will cover the special features of **Nirriti/Nirrti** found in the verses of the Late Mandalas of Rigved.

Part-I: The Early Mandala References of Nirriti (निर्ऋति)

As mentioned earlier, there are total four references of the character **Nirriti (निर्ऋति)** in the Two Early Mandalas and they are **Rv-6.74,2**; **Rv-7.37,7**; **Rv-7.58,1**; and **Rv-7.104,9**. Here one-by-one, we are going to discuss about what the Poets have said about the entity.

i. RV-6.74,2: *somārudrā vi vṛhataṃ viṣūcīmamīvā yā no gayamāviveśa |*
*āre bādhetām **nirritim** parācārasme bhadrā sauśravasāni santu ||*
सोमारुद्रावि वृहत्विषूचीममीवाया नोगयमाविवेश । अरेबांधेथां **निर्ऋति** पराचैरस्मेभद्रा सौश्रवसानि सन्तु॥

Soma and **Rudra**, chase to every quarter the **sickness** that hath **visited our dwelling**.

Drive **Nirrti** away into the distance, and give us excellent and happy glories.

Interpretation: Above verse belongs to the hymn addressed to **Soma** and **Rudra**, wherein the Poet appeals to the **duo** to chase away the evils/diseases (**amiva/अमीवा**) from all directions as they have forcibly arrived in the houses of the Priests. The Poet further says that **Nirriti** needs to be driven away from the place where they reside so that they can live happily there.

Comments: It means to say that there were **serious health issues** in the eastern part of Rigvedic Territory, where the Priestly Community resided. Probably the Poet sees the character **Nirriti** as the main cause of their **sufferings**. Hence he requests to **Soma** and **Rudra** to drive away **Nirriti** immediately from that area as if, she is the source of problems experienced by them.

ii. Rv-7.37,7: *abhi yaṃ devī nirtiścidīṣe nakṣanta indraṃ śaradaḥsupṛkṣaḥ |*
upa tribandhurjaradaṣṭimetyasvaveśaṃ yaṃ kṛṇavanta martāḥ ||

अभि यं देवी निर्रिति श्रिदीशेनक्षन्तुइन्द्रं शरदः सुपृक्षः । उपं त्रिबन्धुर्जरदष्टिमेत्यस्ववेशं कृणवन्तुमर्ताः ॥

Though **Nirrti** the **Goddess** reigneth round him, Autumns with food in plenty come to Indra.

With three close Friends to length of days he cometh, he whom men let not rest at home in quiet.

Interpretation: Despite having bad influence of **Goddess Nirriti** on the world, still **autumns** means season after season, with the help of **Indra**, the people could produce sufficient food. A matured person has developed triple bond relationship with **Indra** that has brought the **God** closer to him, and now the mortal/aged men do not want **Indra** to go away from them.

Comments: **Vasistha**, the Poet of the above verse claims that, it is due to **Indra**, the people could overcome the **ill-effect of Goddess Nirriti** and got food plenty season after season. Here the Composer has clearly designated the evil character **Nirriti** as the Goddess/ **देवी निर्रिति**. The Poet further tells us that as **Indra has power to neutralize the evil effects of Nirriti**. As the people have fallen in love with the God, as a protector they always want him to be with them.

iii. Rv-7.58,1: *pra sākamukṣe arcatā gaṇāya yo daivyaśya dhāmnastuviṣmān |*
uta kṣodanti rodasī mahitvā nakṣante nākaṃ nirteravaṃśāt ||

प्र सांकमुक्षे अर्चता गुणायुयोदैव्यस्यधाम्नुविष्मान् । उत क्षोदन्ति रोदसी महित्वा नक्षन्तेनाकं निर्रतेरवुंशात् ॥

Sing to the troop that pours down rain in common, the Mighty Company of celestial nature.

They make the world-halves tremble with their greatness: from depths of earth and sky
they reach to heaven

Interpretation: Sing the prayer for those (**Maruts**) who arrive in a group from the sky like the **Divine Beings** and **pour rain** on land. They possess great power that can shake two halves of the world (**rodasi**). They easily beat **Nirriti** and travel all the way from Earth to Heaven.

Comments: The verse from the hymn dedicated to **Maruts** describes them as the very powerful entities who are capable to prevail over **Nirriti**/the **evil force** and give rain, and then go to the vault of Heaven. It indirectly means at that time, the world was in the grip of **Nirriti** means **chaos**, and it is not the man, but the divine power like **Maruts** could change the situation.

iv. Rv-7.104,9: *ye pākaśaṃsaṃ viharanta evairye vā bhadraṃ dūṣayanti svadhābhiḥ /*
ahaye vā tān pradadātu soma ā vā dadhātu nirterupasthe //

येपाकशंसं विहरन्त एवैर्ये वा भद्रं दूषयदन्ति स्वधाभिः । अहयेवातान्प्रददातुसोम आ वा दधातु निर्ऋतेरुपस्थे ॥

Those who destroy, as is their wont, the simple, and with their evil natures harm the righteous,
May **Soma** give them over to the serpent, or to the lap of **Nirrti** consign them.

Interpretation: The bad or wicked characters who are in the habit of distorting the sincere speech/prayer (chanting mantras during Yajna) and regularly harm the decent person, may **Soma** hand over them to serpent (**Ahi**) or give them in the custody of **Nirriti** (to destroy them).

Comments: In the above verse, the Poet has spoken about some **unidentified characters** who regularly give trouble to the honest person like him, but tells **Soma** to annihilate them by sending them to Dragon/**Ahi** or **Nirriti**. Here the term **Nirriti** implies **Death** or **Destruction**.

Part-II: The Late Mandala References of Nirriti/ निर्ऋति

i. Rv-5.41,17: *iti cin nu prajāyai paśumatyai devāso vanate martyo va ā devāso vanate artyo vah /*
atrā śivāṃ tanvo dhāsim asyā jarāṃ cin me nirṛtir jaghrasīta //

इति चिन्नुप्रजायै पशुमत्यै देवासो वनन्ते मर्त्यो व आ देवासो वनन्ते मर्त्यो वः । अत्रा शिवां तन्वो धासिमस्य जरां चिन्मे निर्ऋतिर्जग्रसीत ॥

Thus thinking, O ye Gods, the mortal wins you to give him increase of his herds of cattle: the mortal wins him, O ye Gods, your favour.

Here he wins wholesome food to feed this body: as for mine old age, **Nirrti** consume it.

Interpretation: O Gods, a mortal wishes to win you all through the worship to get offspring and cattle/animals, as mortal wants to win your favour too. This is the way, he would get food necessary for his survival. Otherwise, due to my old age, **Nirriti** may eat up me.

Comments: The verse from the hymn devoted to **Visvedevas**/all Gods, tells us about the purpose behind the worshipping various Gods by the Priestly people. In the present verse, the Poet has made it clear that he wants to get a favour from the Gods to obtain more progeny and cattle/animals. Additionally, he said that Gods' worship gives him food to eat. At the same

time, he has fear in his mind that as he has become **old**, **Nirriti** may take him away. It means, the Poet sees **Nirriti**, threat to his life or as the form of **his death** likely to arrive in near future.

ii. Rv-8.24,24: *vetthā hi nīrtīnām vajrahasta parivrjam /*

ahar-ahar śundhyuh paripadāmiva ||

वेत्थाहि निर्रितीनां वज्रहस्त परिव्रजम् । अहरहः शुन्ध्युः परिपदामिव ॥

Thou knowest, Indra, Thunder-armed, how to avoid destructive powers,

As one secure from pitfalls each returning day.

Interpretation: O **Vajra-holder**, you know how to keep away **Nirriti** from day-to-day life. Your approach is very similar to the **Fire God** (शुन्ध्यु/śundhyuh) or **Agni** or **Surya** (?) who drives away anyone tries to go closer to **him due to inherent strength**.

Comments: **Mandala-8** Poet in the hymn dedicated to **Indra** conveys us that God **Indra** who is called as the **Vajra-Holder** knows how to avoid **Nirriti** means **bad entity** or calamity coming nearer to him. This is as good as **Agni** repels or resists anybody who wants to be friendly with the **Fire God**. In this verse, the use of the word **Nirriti** implies an **evil force** or a **sinful actor**.

iii. Rv-1.24,9: *śataṃ te rājan bhiṣajaḥ sahasramurvī ghabhīrā sumatiḥ te astu /*

bādhasva dūre nīrtim parācaiḥ kṛtaṃ cidenah pra mumughdhyasmat ||

शतं ते राजन्भिषजः सहस्रमुर्वी गभीरा सुमतिर्हे अस्तु । बार्धस्व दूरेदू निर्रितिं पराचैः कृतं चिदेनः प्र मुमुग्ध्यस्मत् ॥

A hundred balms are thine, O King, a thousand; deep and wide-reaching also be thy favours.

Far from us, far away drive thou Destruction. Put from us even the sin we have committed.

Interpretation: O king, do deep and wide favours to us by giving hundred and thousand healers. Drive away **Nirriti** from us to a long distance. Free us from the sins even if we have committed in the past.

Comments: As hymn is addressed to **Varuna**, hence it is natural to denote him as the **king** of the world. Here **Nirriti** has been referred to as an **infectious disease/illness** from whom the Poet wants to keep safe distance and hence requests **Varuna** to send **several healers** to them.

iv. Rv-1.38.6: *mo ʃu ɳaḥ parā-parā nirṛtir durhaṇā vadhīt |padīṣṭa tr̥ṣṇayā saha ||*

मोषुणःपरांपरा निर्रतिर्दुर्हणा वधीत् । पृदीष्ट तृष्ण्या सह ॥

Let not destructive plague on plague hard to be conquered, strike its down;

Let each, with drought, depart from us.

Interpretation: Let not **Nirriti** /evil-spirit come closer (*parapara*) to us as the character wants to harm us. Let the animal/beast (*padishta*) get destroyed due to thirst (*trishna*).

Comments: Here the Composer requests **Maruts** to see that **Nirriti** or the **evil-spirit** does not come near to him as its only aim is to cause suffering to us. It would be better if the wild beast (**Nirriti**) dies due to thirst, means the proximity of **Nirriti** was injurious to the Priests/people.

v. Rv-1.117,5: *suṣupvāṃsaṃ na nirṛterupasthe sūryaṃ na dasrā tamasi kṣiyantam |*

śubhe rukmaṃ na darśataṃ nikhātamudūpathuraśvinā vandanāya ||

सुषुप्वांसं निर्रतेरुपस्थेसूर्यं दंसातमसि क्षियन्तम् । शुभेरुक्मं न दर्शतं निखातमुदूपथुरश्विना मुदू वन्दनाय ॥

Ye brought forth Vandana, ye Wonder-Workers, for triumph, like fair gold that hath been buried,

Like one who slumbered in destruction's bosom, or like the Sun when dwelling in the darkness.

Interpretation: As the **Sun** dwells in the darkness, in the same way someone has gone to sleep in the lap of **Nirriti**. O **Asvins** the wonder workers, as you unearth beautiful gold (शुभे रुक्मं) that has been buried under the ground, in the same manner, you have made us to worship or praise (वन्दनाय) you.

Comments: Poet in the hymn dedicated to **Asvins** tells us that **Nirriti** takes a person to darkness or in the state of gloom. It indirectly means when a person loses his self-consciousness or independence, then it can be said that he/she is under the influence of **Nirriti**. But the twin Gods **Asvins** using their special power can bring him/her back to the **state of alertness**. In other words, **Asvins** can rescue the people from the clutches of **Nirriti**.

vi. Rv-1.119,7: *yuvaṃ vandanaṃ nirṛtaṃ jaranyayā rathaṃ na dasrā karaṇā saminvathaḥ /
kṣetrādā vipraṃ janatho vipanyayā pra vāmatra vidhate daṃsanā bhuvat ||*

युवं वन्दनं निर्रृतं जरण्यया रथं दसा करुणा समिन्वथः । क्षेत्रादा विप्रं जनथोविपन्यया प्र वामत्रं विधतेदंसनां भुवत् ॥

Doers of marvels, skilful workers, ye restored Vandana, like a car, worn out with length of days.

From earth ye brought the sage to life in wondrous mode; be your great deeds done here for him who honours you.

Interpretation: O **Asvins**, you have restored **Vandana**, a mode of worship here like a reconditioning a cart that was **worn out due to ageing**. Your great act has brought a **Sage to life** means due to the grace of **Asvins**, an old Seer who had stopped participating in **Yajna** worship, has now re-started composing **Praise-song** on the occasion of **Yajna**.

Comments: In the verse addressed to **Asvins**, Poet has used the term **Nirriti** to highlight the **effect of ageing on the life of a person**. In other words, an **Old Age** makes a person dull and inactive as he/she no longer possess mental and physical strength, zeal, and enthusiasm to do the routine work as **ageing** compels him to withdraw from the day-to-day responsibility. But Poet says that **Asvins** who look after health and wealth issues of the living beings, can re-kindle the **life** in the **Old and re-tired Poet (Vipra)** too. It means, the Composer believes that **Asvins** can help a person to overcome the effect of **Nirriti** (reversing the **aging effect**).

vii. Rv-1.164,32: *ya īṃ cakāra na so asya veda ya īṃ dadarśa hirughin nutasmāt |
sa māturyonā parivīto antarbahuprajā nirṛtimā viveśa ||*

य ईं चकार न सो अस्य वेदय ईं ददर्श हिरुगिन्नुतस्मात् । स मातुर्योनापरिवीतो अन्तर्बहुप्रजा निर्रतिमा विवेश ॥

He who hath made him cloth not comprehend him: from him who saw him surely is he hidden.

He, yet enveloped in his Mother's bosom, source of much life, hath sunk into **destruction**.

Interpretation: One who has **made him**, does not embrace or touch or come in contact with him, as he watches **him** from a long distance. **He** is **enveloped in his mother's womb** which is the origin of life, and has many births. He gets sunk into **destruction**.

Comments: Cryptically composed verse, when read along with the next verse **Rv-1.164,33**; and then the mystery gets unfolded. Here the meaning of “**One**” is **Heaven** who is believed to be father of the **Sun**. As the latter moves in the mid-space and hence does not come in contact with his father **Heaven**. ‘**He (Surya/the Sun) is enveloped in his mother’s womb**’ means every evening, the **Sun** disappears in the womb of his **mother Earth**. ‘**He has many births**’ means daily in the evening, **Surya/the Sun** dies and takes a new birth in the next morning. “**He gets sunk into destruction**” means daily in the evening, the **Sun** passes through the phase of **destruction/death**. In the verse **Rv-1.164,32**; the term **Nirriti** stands for **destruction** or **death** (of the **Sun** but in the evening).

viii. RV-10.18,10: *upa sarpa mātaram bhūmimetāmuruvyacasam prthivīṃsuśevām |*
ūrṇamradā yuvatirdakṣiṇāvata eṣā tvā pātunirterupasthāt ||

उप सर्प मातरं भूमिमेतामुरुव्यचसं पृथिवीं सुशेवाम् । ऊर्णम्रदा युवतिर्दक्षिणावत एषा त्वा पातु निर्ऋतेरुपस्थात् ॥

Betake thee to the lap of Earth the Mother, of Earth far-spreading, very kind and gracious.

Young Dame, **wool-soft** unto the guerdon giver, may she preserve us from **Destruction's bosom**.

Interpretation: Go to the lap of **Mother-Land** (Earth), as Earth is very kind, widespread or spacious. She is **youthful** and **soft like wool** who gives reward to her devotee. May she protect you from **Nirriti**.

Comments: Verse belonging to hymn addressed to **Death** and/or **Funeral** rite conveys us that **after death** of a person or Priest, dead-body is buried in the ground. The verse is composed in such a way that as if, Poet is telling dead-one that Mother Earth/Land is very soft (means **soil**) and she is the generous gift giver. When the corpse is laid in a pit/soil, then Earth would protect a dead-one from the effect of **Nirriti**. Here the word **Nirriti** stands for **Decay** or **Decomposition of the Corpse**. It means insects, animals who thrive on the dead-body, belong to the **team of Nirriti**. It also manifests that, in those days, the **Burial practice** was in place and it was considered to be the last rite performed to pay respect to the dead-one.

ix. Rv-10.36,2: *dyauśca naḥ prthivī ca pracetasa ṛtāvarī rakṣatāmamhasoriṣaḥ |*
mā durvidatrā nirtirna īśata tad devānāmavoadyā vṛṇīmahe ||

द्यौश्च नः पृथिवी च प्रचेतस ऋतावरी रक्षतामहंसोरिषः । मा दुर्विदत्रा निरृतिर्न ईशतद्देवानामवो अद्या वृणीमहे ॥

May **Dyaus and Prthivi**, wise, true to Holy Law, keep us in safety from distress and injury.

Let not malignant **Nirrti** rule over us. We crave to-day this gracious favour of the Gods.

Interpretation: **Heaven and Earth** who are wise and the protectors of **Rta**/celestial laws should protect us. Let not malignant **Nirriti** who has dangerous or hostile nature rule over us. Today, we have chosen the Deities (Heaven and Earth) who are favourable to us/living beings.

Comments: Through the verse from the hymn devoted to **Visvedevas**, the Composer requests **Heaven and Earth** the **universal parents of the Deities** to give protection to them from **Nirriti**. The Poet further says that today, he has chosen them for worship on the basis of their role in protecting or implementing **Rta/eternal laws**. Here **Nirriti** means the **wicked force**.

x. **Rv-10.36,4:** *grāvā vadannapa rakṣāṃsi sedhatu duṣvapnyaṃ nirtiṃviśvamatriṇam / ādityaṃ śarma marutāmaśīmahi tad devānāmavoadyā vṛṇīmahe ||*

ग्रावावदन्नप रक्षांसि सेधतुदुष्वप्यं निरृतिं विश्वमत्रिणं । आदित्यं शर्म मरुतामशीमहितदेवानामवो अद्या वृणीमहे ॥

May ringing press-stones keep the Raksasas afar, ill dream, and **Nirrti**, and each voracious fiend.

May the Adityas and the Maruts shelter us. We crave this gracious favour of the Gods to-day.

Interpretation: May **hard stone** drive away the **demonic characters, bad dreams, Nirriti** and **all exploiters** from us. Let **Adityas** and **Maruts** shelter us. Today, we have selected these Gods for worship who would definitely do favour to us.

Comments: The verse is similar in composition to earlier verse **Rv-10.36,2** as it also belongs to the same hymn. Here, the Poet prays to **Adityas** and **Maruts** to get protection from several evil characters including **Nirriti**. Here **Nirriti** stands for one among the **oppressors**.

xi. **Rv-10.76,4:** *apa hata rakṣaso bhaṅghurāvata skabhāyata nirtiṃsedhatāmatim / ā no rayiṃ sarvavīraṃ sunotana devāvyambharata ślokamadrayaḥ ||*

अपं हत रुक्षसो भङ्गुरावतः स्कभायतु निर्रतिंसेधतामतिम् । आ नो रयिं सर्ववीरं सुनोतन देवाव्यं भरतुश्लोकमद्रयः ॥

Drive ye the treacherous demons far away from us: keep **Nirrti** afar and banish Penury.

Pour riches forth for us with troops of hero sons, and bear ye up, O Stones, the song that visits Gods.

Interpretation: Destroy the demons and drive **Nirriti** and the **forces of ignorance (amati)** away from us. O stones, pour the riches (drink/juice) for all the **hero sons** among us. Make us to compose the song of praise that will please the Gods as well.

Comments: This verse is from the hymn devoted to **Pressing Stones** wherein Poet appeals to them crush all the demonic characters including **Nirriti** and inspire us to prepare a new **Shloka** or a **Poem of Praise** that would be liked by the Gods. Here **Nirriti** stands for an **evil force**.

xii. Rv-10.95,14: *sudevo adya prapatedanāvṛt parāvataṃ paramām ghantavā u |*

adhā śayīta nirterupasthe.adhainaṃ vrkā rabhasāsoadyuh ||

सुदेवोअद्य प्रपतेदनावृत्परावतं परमां गन्तवा उ । अधाशयीत निर्रतेरुपस्थेऽधैनुवकां रभसासो अद्युः ॥

Thy lover shall flee forth this day for ever, to seek, without return, the farthest distance.

Then let his bed be in **Destruction's bosom**, and there let fierce rapacious wolves devour him.

Interpretation: What if your lover goes a long distance, never to return (to meet you). Then he rests in the lap of **Nirriti**, There if the greedy wolves finish him ---.

Comments: The verse is a part of the famous hymn of **Mandala-10** that describes a love story of **Urvashi** and **Pururavas**. The Poet has composed the said verse in such a manner that as if, **Pururavas** the son of queen **Ila** is having dialogue with **Urvashi** and during discussion, he is asking her some questions like; what would be her reaction if he (Pururavas/her lover) goes to a distance place, never to come back to see her again? How would she feel, if he sleeps in the lap of **Nirriti**? How would she react when in the forest, the ravenous wolves eat his body?

Here probable meaning of the term **Nirriti** is **infidelity** or **unfaithfulness** (sleeping or staying with other woman).

xiii. Rv-10.114,2: *tisro deṣṭrāya nirtīrupāsate dīrghaśruto vi hijānanti vahnayaḥ /*

tāsāṃ ni cikyuḥ kavayo nidānampareṣu yā ghuhyeṣu vrataṣu //

तिस्रोदेष्ट्राय निरृतीरुपांसते दीर्घश्रुतो वि हि जानन्ति वह्नयः । तासानि चिक्वुः कुवयो निदानं परेषु गृह्येषु व्रतेषु ॥

The priests beard far away, as they are ordered, serve the **three Nirrtis**, for well they know them.

Sages have traced the cause that first produced them, dwelling in distant and mysterious chambers.

Interpretation: Since a long, deliberations are going on, how to serve **three forms of Nirriti** to whom the Priests know very well. Sage-poets know the cause of existence of these characters and their distant dwelling place where they remain hidden for a long.

Comments: First time in **Rigved**, in the hymn dedicated to **Visvedeavas**, the Poet has spoken about worshipping or serving the **three Nirritis** to whom the Sages know very well. However, he has described that they (three **Nirriti**) live in the remote places and hide themselves in the caves (*guha*). Here **Nirriti does not mean the evil force or death** as the description does not indicate the character (**Nirriti**) wants to harm anyone (as they hide somewhere).

xiv. Rv-10.161,2: *yadi kṣitāyuryadi vā pareto yadi mṛtyorantikam nītaeva |*

tamā harāmi nirterupasthādasparṣamenamśataśārādāya //

यदि क्षितायुर्यदि वापरेतो यदि मृत्योरन्तिकं नीत एव । तमा हरामि निरृतेरुपस्थादस्पर्षमेनं शतशारदाय ॥

Be his days ended, be he now departed, be he brought very near to death already,

Out of **Destruction's lap** again I bring him, save him for life to last a **hundred autumns**.

Interpretation: Even if his life-span is over, or already died, or on the verge of death, I can rescue him from the clutches of **Nirriti**, bring him to life once again and grant him hundred autumn's longevity.

Comments: Above verse belongs to hymn dedicated to **Diseases**, in which the Poet claims that the God can restore the life into a patient who is suffering from a life threatening disease that is caused due to attack of **Nirriti** (in the form of sickness) on his body, and God gives assurance of the **hundred years** of life to him. Here **Nirriti** stands for **Death** or **Disease induced death**.

xv. Rv-10.164,1: *apehi manasaspate.apa krāma paraścara |*
paro nirṭyā ācakṣva bahudhā jīvato manah ||

अपेहि मनसस्पतेऽपं क्राम पुरश्चर । पुरो निर्ऋत्या आ चक्ष्व बहुधा जीवतोमनः ॥

Avaunt, thou Master of the mind Depart, and vanish far away.

Look on **Destruction** far from hence. The live man's mind is manifold.

Interpretation: Go away, O *master of Thought*, disappear from here and go to a long distance. Go and tell **Nirriti**, who is far off from us that “**mind of a living being thinks in many ways**”.

Comments: The verse is from the hymn addressed to **Bad Dreams**, wherein the Poet has pointed out that how a bad dream or an evil thought generated in the mind of a person creates trouble or unrest in his life. The Composer tells *Manaspate/* the **Lord of thought** to send a strong message to **Nirriti** who is now far away, not to disturb him by nucleating ill or negative or destructive thoughts in his mind as it (mind) is capable to produce better and constructive thoughts. Here the word **Nirriti** means **chaos** or **an instability caused due to evil thoughts**.

xvi. Rv-10.165,1: *devāḥ kapota iṣito yadichan dūto nirṭyā idamājaghāma |*
tasmā arcāma kṛṇavāma niṣkṛtiṃ śaṃ no astu dvipadeśaṃ catuṣpade ||

देवाः कपोतं इषितोयदिच्छन्दूतो च्छन्दू निर्ऋत्या इदमाजगाम । तस्मा अर्चाम कृणवामनिष्कृतिं नो अस्तुद्विपदेशं चतुष्पदे ॥

Gods, whatsoever the **Dove** came hither seeking, sent to us as the **envoy of Destruction**.

For that let us sing hymns and make atonement. We'll be with our quadrupeds and bipeds

Interpretation: Gods, a Dove (or pigeon-*kapotam*) has arrived here and looking for someone, probably sent by **Nirriti** as her messenger. We shall pray to Gods and apologize them for our acts/sins. Let our two-footed and four-footed beings be in the happy state of mind.

Comments: This verse is from the hymn devoted to **Visvedevas** informs us that possibly a dove or a pigeon sent by **Nirriti** is searching a target. Poet wishes to sing a praise song to accept mistakes or sins they have committed in the past. He feels that nothing should go wrong with the **two-footed** or **four-footed beings** living with him. Here **Nirriti** means **Destruction**.

xvii. In the hymn **Rv-10.59** dedicated to **Many Deities**, and there are **four consecutive verses** wherein we find **identical description about the word Nirriti** (परातरं सु निर्रतिर्जिहीताम्). Hence discussion on these four verses has been taken up at the last and also grouped together.

Rv-10.59,1: *pra tārīyāyuh pratarāṃ navīya sthātāreva kratumatārathasya |*
adha cyavāna ut tavītyartham parātaram su nirtirjihītām ||

प्र तार्यायुः प्रतरं नवीयुः स्थातरेव क्रतुमता रथस्य । अध चवानुत्तवीत्यर्थं परातरं सु निर्रतिर्जिहीताम् ॥

His life hath been renewed and carried forward as two men, car-borne, by the skilful driver.

One falls, then seeks the goal with quickened vigour. **Let Nirrti depart to distant places.**

Interpretation: May the life-span of a person get extended further in a similar manner as a skilful driver of a Ratha takes a passenger to very long journey without any difficulty. As an **active** (चवान) person wants to live longer, let **Nirriti** go far off.

Comments: In the above verse, Poet says that if a person **takes care of his health properly** or keeps himself in good condition (both mental and physical), then he would live longer or his life journey would be a smooth affair. This way, he would keep **Nirriti** away from him. Here **Nirriti** means **Death** or **Destruction** that causes due to **ill-health** or **ageing**.

Rv-10.59,2: *sāman nu rāye nidhiman nvannaṃ karāmahe su purudhaśravāṃsi |*
tā no viśvāni jaritā mamattu parātaram su nirtirjihītām ||

सामन्त्रायेनिधिमन्त्रं करांमहेसुपुरुध श्रवांसि । ता नोविश्वानि जरिता ममत्तुपरातरं सु निर्रतिर्जिहीताम् ॥

Here is the psalm for wealth, and food, in plenty: let us do many deeds to bring us glory.

All these our doings shall delight the singer. **Let Nirrti depart to distant places.**

Interpretation: When **Saman mantra** is chanted and food is offered to achieve the wealth that would bring fame to us. Thus, the old (**jarita**) Singer/Priest would delight the whole world and hence **Nirriti** would go far off.

Comments: Content of the verse implies that when **Yajna ritual** is conducted, then the chanting of mantra and offering of food to **Agni** and **other Gods** would give wealth and fame to the Priests and the sponsor. Hence **Nirriti** would not dare to come near to them. Here **Nirriti** stands for **misfortune** or **bad days** or **ill-fate** or **sickness**.

Rv-10.59,3: *abhī śvaryaḥ paṁsyairbhavema dyaurna bhūmiṁ ghirayonājran |*

*tā no viśvāni jaritā ciketa parātaraṁ su **nirtirjihītām** ||*

अभी ष्वर्यः पौंस्यै भवेमद्यौर्न भूमिं गिरयोनाज्रान् । ता नोविश्वानि जरिता चिकेत परातरं सु **निर्ऋतिर्जिहीताम्** ॥

May we overcome our foes with acts of valour, as heaven is over earth, hills over lowlands.

All these our deeds the singer hath considered. **Let Nirrti depart to distant places.**

Interpretation: In the above verse, the Composer communicates us that like **Heaven lies over Earth** and **Mountain stands on Land**, similarly, they too can overcome or surpass their enemy or competitor due to their act or strength. When the Singer sings song our deeds and glory, then **Nirriti** would live far off from them.

Comments: Poet in the above verse has given maximum stress on **achieving the highest name and fame** using **vigour** and **strength** over the **foes**. When their capabilities are known to all, then even **Nirriti** would keep safe distance from them. Here **Nirriti** could mean **fear of loss in battle** or **demoralization** or **humiliation** (opposite of self-confidence).

Rv-10.59,4: *mo śu ṇaḥ soma mṛtyave parā dāḥ paśyema nu sūryamuccarantam |*

*dyubhirhito jarimā sū no astu parātaraṁ su **nirtirjihītām** ||*

मोषुणः सोम मृत्यवेपरां दाःपश्येमनुसूर्यमुच्चरन्तम् । द्युभिर्हितोजरिमा सूनो अस्तुपरातरं सु **निर्ऋतिर्जिहीताम्** ॥

Give us not up as prey to death, O **Sorna** still let us look upon the Sun arising.

Let our old age with passing days be kindly. **Let Nirrti depart to distant place**

Interpretation: O **Soma**, do not hand over us to **Death**. May we see the **rising Sun** again.

Let us spend our old age peacefully and happily. Let **Nirriti** keep away from us.

Comments: In the above verse, Poet has brought **Soma** into picture so as to derive benefit from the drink to live longer. As the Composer wants to see tomorrow's Sunrise, hence requests the God **Soma** to bestow him good health so that he would pass his **old age** without any problem and **Nirriti** would not pose difficulties for him. Here **Nirriti** stands for **suffering due to ill-health/old age**.

Table-1: Gist of the verses Rv-10.59,1 to 4

Verse Number	Applicable to	Remedial measure to keep “Nirriti/ निर्रिति ” away
RV-10.59,1	All	Do everything needed to remain Active and Healthy.
Rv-10.59,2	Priests	Perform Yajnas and earn Wealth and Name.
Rv-10.59,3	Warrior Class	Defeat the enemies to achieve the Top most Position in the world (acquire fame through vigour).
Rv-10.59,4	All Old Age Persons	Drink “Soma juice” to live longer.

Comparing information given in the hymn Rv-7.50 with the references of Nirriti

As discussed in **Table-1**, the Poet has suggested some methods to be followed by the different people of the Vedic Society to neutralise the **bad effect of Nirriti/निर्रिति** on their lives.

Earlier, **Vasistha** the **Lead Composer of Mandala-7**, in the four verses of the hymn **Rv-7.50** has brought out the living conditions prevailed in the North-eastern part of Rigvedic Territory, especially when he visited **Puru’s country located on the bank of river Saraswati**. As per the content of the hymn, people were suffering from **various water borne diseases** due to polluted water as some rivers of that region had completely gone dry and some had become seasonal. The Poet has reported that even the members of Priestly community who stayed there, were suffering from the diseases (wounded foot etc.). Although the Poet has not used the word **Nirriti / निर्रिति** in the said hymn, yet the pathetic living conditions of the region described in those four verses do imply the same (indirect effect of **Nirriti**).

Now take a serious look at the verse **Rv-8.48,11** given below [1].

Rv-8.48,11: अपत्या अंस्थुरनिरा अमीवानिरंत्रसुन्तमिषीचीरभैषुः । आ सोमो अस्माँअरुहृद्विहाया अगन्मयत्रं प्रतिरन्त आयुः ॥

Our **maladies** have lost their strength and vanished: they feared, and passed away into the darkness.

Soma hath risen in us, exceeding mighty, and we are come where men prolong existence.

Above verse is addressed to **Soma** in which the Poet has mentioned that due to the change of place (as the members of the Priestly Community moved from the east of river **Sindhu** to its west side), diseases have disappeared completely. Due to availability of **Soma** in that area, the people were experiencing longer life-span. In this verse also, there is no mention of the term **Nirriti**, but the use of word **अमीवा/Amiva** in the verse hints at diseases or maladies.

Discussion on the information compiled on the term Nirriti/ निर्रिति

As a matter of fact, the **Mandala-6** Poet from **Bharadwaja clan** in the verse **Rv-6.74,2** did not define a newly introduced character as the **non-complier of Rta**, but talked about the disorder created by the **evil feature** in the Vedic world that has caused panic everywhere and seriously put the all living beings in trouble and hence gave a new name **Nirriti** probably manifests it is an **independent entity** that exists in the Vedic world since a long in some form (this is based on the fact that every living being has natural or accidental death), but it runs parallel to **Rta**, who follows her own rules and regulation, and hence is not governed by the cosmic or nature's law existed in the Vedic Universe since inception.

Surprisingly, despite the fact that the **Mandala-6** Poet has described **Nirriti/ निर्रिति** as the trouble maker/bad being, still the **Mandla-7** Poet belonging to **Vasistha family** in the verse **Rv-7.37,7** has designated the demonic character or the key adversary of living things as the **Goddess who is immortal**. Hence, she may be seen as the **Goddess of Darkness**.

Based on the **various Poetic descriptions**, **Nirriti/ निर्रिति** could also mean the **Goddess of Misfortune and Untimely Death**.

Characteristic Features of the Goddess Nirriti deduced from the Rigvedic Verses:

- An independent entity who **does not follow Rta**/the celestial laws of the Vedic World.
- Wishes to control everything as per her **own agenda**.
- Uses her power to create **negative effect** on the lives of all living things.
- Cannot be impressed or pleased by worship as has no interest in well-being of mortals.
- Believes in giving **ill-treatment** to the living beings and their **destruction**.
- Facilitates the **sufferings of everybody living in the world**.
- Creates trouble/hardship for all as she wants to **push everyone to the Dark Age**.
- Tries to **weaken beliefs in Other Divine Beings** who are the well-wishers of Man.
- **Does not bless, but curses** the Human beings.
- Causes untimely death by sending **disease-spreading germs** to various locations.
- Attacks corpse by employing animals and insects that eat up the dead body.

Even the **destructions due to natural calamities** like **floods, storms** and **earthquakes** could be considered as the part of the **devastative acts of Nirriti**.

In short, on the basis of description given in the various hymns of **Rigved**, the character **Nirriti** can be taken as the perfect representation of the **sadistic mentality** as **she** has been described to be deadly against the **physical, mental** and **materialistic progress** of the humans.

In practical sense, **Nirriti/ निर्रिति** may be seen as the consequence of a prolong drought that would have caused harm or damage to all living beings present in the **Rigvedic Territory** during the **Bronze age period**. Frequent droughts must have taken toll of the human life as the prevailing conditions provided fertile ground for **Nirriti** to create **negative impact** on the lives of the all living beings. Therefore, the Poets often told **Nirriti** to go away from their localities.

Higher frequency of the term **Nirriti** in **Mandala-1** and **10** (the **Last Two Mandalas of Rigved**) makes it apparent that the **Vedic/Harappan People** had to pass through difficult phase of life during that period as well. Due to the bad living conditions prevailed in the **Eastern Part of Rigvedic Territory** (west side of river **Yamuna**), probably during the composition of **Mandala-10**, the **Priests** would have decided to settle permanently on the bank of river **Ganga**.

Special Observation

Verse **Rv-10.59,10** is addressed to **Indra** in which the Poet has asked him to drive a **bullock-cart** (the word *vahata/वहत* stands for **Bull/Ox**) instead of *Asva* (the True Horse?).

Rv-10.59,10: amindrera ya gūmanaḍvāhaṃ ya āvaha duśīnarāṇyā anah /

bharatāmapa yad rapo dyauḥ prthivi kṣamā rapo moṣu te kiṃ canāmamat ||

समिन्द्रेरयुगामन्डवाह्य आवहदुशीनराण्या अनः । भरतामपयद्रपोद्यौः पृथिवि क्षमा रपोमोषुतेकिं चनाममत् ॥

Drive forward thou the **wagon-ox**, O **Indra**, which brought **Usinarani's wagon** hither.

May Heaven and Earth uproot and sweep iniquity and shame away: nor sin nor sorrow trouble thee.

Here the basic question is, why did the Poet of the **Last Mandala** ask God **Indra** to push forward an **ox** or a **bull driven cart** that has brought the bride **Usinarani**, but did not mention **Asva drawn Ratha**? It means, **Asva/ the True Horse** was out of the sight of the Poet.

Bookish scholars need to look into **this Last Mandala verse** seriously.

References:

1. “Rig Veda” (Bilingual), Translated by Ralph T. H. Griffith (1896) in PDF
2. Monier-Williams Dictionary.

Note: The reader who has serious doubt about the Griffith Translation, can refer to the translations made by other Eminent Vedic Scholars of his/her choice.